

Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of February 12, 2008

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Voting Members Present

Bob Cope (Chair)	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
Gregory Knoop	Oudens + Knoop Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Steven Robins, Esq.	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing Wisconsin Place
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
Robert Schwarzbart	Friendship Heights Village Council
R. Mallory Starr	Somerset House Management Association
Garry Tyran	Eagle Bank (Employers of fewer than 50)

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
David Kantor	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

Jessica Adams (Vice Chair)	The JBG Companies
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Jeffrey Slavin	Town of Somerset
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

Guests

Geoffrey Biddle	Chevy Chase Village
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Regional Services Center
Robert Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
William McCloskey	Brookdale Resident
Samuel Oji	MC Commuter Services

Items 1, 2, & 3 – Introductions, Review/Approval of Minutes, Chair's Comments:

Members and guests introduced themselves, and Chairman Bob Cope mentioned a new Director has been designated to replace Deborah Snead at the Bethesda Chevy-Chase Regional Services Center. The new Director is **Kenneth Hartman** who later joined the meeting.

Item 4 – FY 09 Budget Meeting with County Executive: **Jim Carlson** discussed minor changes and additions that will be made to the FY09 budget priorities document and cover letter for County Executive Leggett (included in meeting packet). The meeting with the County Executive is scheduled for the evening of February 28, 2008.

David Glass reiterated his position that in light of the current budget shortfall the County should discontinue the planned opening of the Commuter Store. Support for the store is included in the letter to the County Executive about the FY09 budget priorities. Motion to approve the FY09 budget priorities attachment and cover letter was made and seconded. Eight committee members voted to approve the letter, with one opposed.

Item 5 – Bus Station Update: **Leslie Olson** discussed the project to replace the bus station expansion joints on the surface level in the bus terminal. The project has been moved up to coincide with WMATA's ceiling work. The progress of the work is on target.

Jim Carlson said that WMATA ordered two new sprinkler heads on February 1, as the previous ones were too long. All the other heads have been installed and current bus operations are unimpeded. These are special nitrogen filled heads.

Ms. Olson stated that there are two types of heads that the Land Company will approve. Ms. Olson also pointed out that WMATA's contractor did not raise the ceiling enough in the sections affected by the sprinkler head issue, resulting in the need to order new, shorter sprinkler heads.

Item 6 – Taxi Stand Update: **Mr. Carlson** included two letters in the meeting packet: one from Chevy Chase Land Company to DPWT Director Holmes, stating the Land Company's position on further suggested improvements to the Wisconsin Circle call button, and Mr. Holmes' reply that the current pilot of the call button was scheduled to be completed at the end of January 2008. If the indication at the end of the pilot is that the call button arrangement does not work, then the Department plan, ultimately, is to move the taxis back on to Wisconsin Circle.

Leslie Olson stated that she has reviewed the Advisory Committee minutes for the last year, and has concluded that over time the Committee has supported something that all along was never meant to be supported.

- The County's Taxi Operations Manager has indicated that taxis are not picking up passengers on Willard, but are being dispatched.
- There has been a four cab maximum on Willard, but this has never been enforced.
- In the past the Committee has recommended that the pilot should run for six months at a minimum. Forty-five days is an inadequate amount of time for the pilot, especially considering the delay in getting proper signage.
- The Sector Plan was previously reviewed by this Committee, and the taxi stand location behind Giant was included in the original site plan.
- Part of the agreement with the Commuter Store would be direction to patrons on how to use the taxi call button, yet there is no Commuter Store.

Ms. Olson stated it is premature to conclude that the call button is a failure based on a 45-day pilot. Another factor that makes it difficult to draw conclusions is that not all of the elements recommended under the Sector Plan, such as the Commuter Store, are yet in place.

Robert Schwarzbart stated that based on experience thus far the call button arrangement is very likely to fail. Aside from the details **Ms. Olson** stated, Mr. Schwarzbart believes there is a basic design flaw. Whatever time period is provided by the pilot, the results will most likely be the

same and, at some point, the Committee needs to think realistically about the situation. While there aren't any good options that stand out, moving the cabs back on to Wisconsin Circle would still serve a good purpose. Firstly, the lane that the cabs would use is virtually always occupied anyway (supply vehicles, commuters, idling buses, etc.); secondly, more visible taxis may help promote higher usage of public transportation.

Mr. Cope summarized some of the possible options:

- The Committee could make no recommendation;
- The Committee could advise DPWT to close the Willard stand in order to give the call button arrangement a chance to work;
- The Committee could advise DPWT to allow unlimited taxis on the Circle;
- The Committee could advise DPWT to allow some maximum number of taxis on the Circle.
- The Committee could advise DPWT that if the decision is to put the cabs back on Wisconsin Circle, to move the stand closer to Western or Wisconsin to help avoid midblock crossings.

After further discussion, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that DPWT extend the taxi call button pilot to 120 days, with the additional request to close down the Willard Avenue stand.

Item 7 - Final Approved Letter to MSHA re: Willard/Wisconsin: Mr. Cope stated that the final version of the letter was signed and sent. The signed letter is included in the meeting packet.

Item 8 – Other Business: Mr. Cope's second term ends June 30, 2008. Jessica Adams' term is continuing. However new officers must be elected. Nominations will be sought for Chair and Vice Chair at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05

Next meeting: March 11, 2008